VIRTUAL ALABAMA   PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Bob Riley
Governor

Jim Walker
Director

http://www.virtual.alabama.gov   http://www.dhs.alabama.gov

Introduction: In October 2005, the Alabama Department of Homeland Security (AL DHS) initiated a project to access new technologies in 3D visualization. At the request of Governor Bob Riley, AL DHS began exploring and identifying ways to leverage existing state asset imagery and infrastructure data into a visualization tool that is affordable, scalable, maintainable, and capable of employing the power of existing and evolving internet based applications. As a result, the Virtual Alabama program was created.

Virtual Alabama uses a 3D globe interface to retrieve images from a merged global imagery dataset. This dataset transforms massive amounts of data into useful information for technical and non-technical users. As an example, Virtual Alabama provides the common operating picture and situational awareness needed by Alabama's first responders to protect lives and safeguard citizens before, during, and after a disaster.

Virtual Alabama serves a wide user base of state and local officials at various levels of technological proficiency. As an information tool, Virtual Alabama reduces technology gaps in economically challenged areas and levels the information "playing field" throughout the state. Additionally, the program provides the ability to integrate and distribute proprietary data securely across the internet.

In August 2006, Virtual Alabama reached initial operational capability (IOC). In November 2007, Virtual Alabama had over 1800 online users and the best imagery available from all 67 Alabama counties ingested into the program.

Partners: Alabama Department of Homeland Security; U.S. Space & Rocket Center; and various federal, state, and local government agencies.

Who is benefiting from Virtual Alabama?

- Homeland Security
- Emergency Management and Fire Services
- Public Safety
- City and County Government
- Economic Development/Planning
- Natural Resource Management
- Environmental Agencies
- Law Enforcement and Forensics
- Education
- Agriculture
- Transportation
- Military

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Program Goals: Massive amounts of data and imagery inventory currently exist in Alabama. The goal of Virtual Alabama is to create efficiencies and cost savings by utilizing existing data in lieu of gathering new costly imagery. AL DHS relies heavily on state and local partnerships to provide previously collected imagery and asset data. Virtual Alabama leverages existing data sets to give an overall visual representation of the state's data inventory.

The visualization platform helps stakeholders, users, and decision makers understand the quality, resolution, scale, coverage, vintage, and useful applications of existing data and imagery. This, in turn, provides valuable information that will improve efficiencies, reduce redundancies throughout the state, and illustrate where data is currently missing or incomplete.

The AL DHS team is committed to building collaborative partnerships and data sharing cooperatives throughout Alabama.

Furthermore, Virtual Alabama will create a forum to provide information about upcoming data acquisitions and facilitate cost sharing opportunities among state and local agencies and the federal government.

Real time activities associated with Virtual Alabama:

- Common operational picture
- Emergency evacuation routing
- Situational awareness/understanding
- Vehicle and asset tracking
- Critical infrastructure mapping
- Student density
- Identification of assets and vulnerabilities
- Visualization of risks
- Plume modeling and real time sensors feeds
- Implementation of protective measures during events
- Damage assessment